



# MAGIC VALLEY

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA, & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

## LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

As seen in Magic Valley Table 1, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Magic Valley Labor Market Area was 4.1 percent in January 2001. This rate is two-tenths of a percentage point lower than December 2000 and three-tenths of a percentage point lower than January 2000. There was the expected post-holiday drop off in *Retail, Services, and Wholesale Trade*, and these sectors showed decreases in employment of 4.1 percent, and 2.2 percent, respectively. *Mining & Construction* also showed a decrease from December to January because very cold weather halted projects. *Food Processing* continued to be strong and this had a stabilizing effect on the overall employment picture. There are unmistakable signs of economic cooling in the Magic Valley, but unemployment remains low and employment levels remain stable.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Twin Falls County

- The United Way of South Central Idaho has surpassed a standing fund-raising goal for the first time this year. Magic Valley communities donated a record \$418,000 to the United Way's 2000-2001 campaign drive, surpassing the \$400,000 goal set three years ago. Contributions topped last year's total of \$355,000 by more than 17 percent. Eighty percent of the money raised comes from workplace campaigns and corporate donations. More than 45 employers conducted employee campaigns this year. The United Way annual fund-raising drive will benefit more than 20 organizations and charities, such as the Boys & Girls Club of Magic Valley and the American Red Cross.
- The U.S. Postal Service has announced that it will close a remote encoding center in Twin Falls in August 2001. The center employs 105 persons. The closure is the result of

Magic Valley Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Twin Falls, Jerome, and Gooding counties

	Jan 2001*	Dec 2000	Jan 2000	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	46,890	50,410	47,710	-7.0	-1.7
Unemployment	1,920	2,190	2,100	-12.3	-8.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.1	4.3	4.4		
Total Employment	44,970	48,220	45,610	-6.7	-1.4
<b>Unadjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	45,130	49,310	45,960	-8.5	-1.8
Unemployment	2,390	2,270	2,590	5.3	-7.7
% of Labor Force Unemployed	5.3	4.6	5.6		
Total Employment	42,740	47,040	43,370	-9.1	-1.5
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**</b>					
<b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>	6,880	7,170	6,670	-4.0	3.1
Mining & Construction	1,750	2,050	1,800	-14.6	-2.8
Manufacturing	5,130	5,120	4,870	0.2	5.3
Durable Goods	770	770	850	0.0	-9.4
Nondurable Goods	4,360	4,350	4,020	0.2	8.5
Food Processing	3,350	3,360	3,020	-0.3	10.9
All Other Nondurable Goods	1,010	990	1,000	2.0	1.0
<b>Service-Producing Industries</b>	29,760	29,730	28,930	0.1	2.9
Transportation, Comm., & Utilities	3,000	3,060	2,850	-2.0	5.3
Wholesale Trade	2,210	2,260	2,260	-2.2	-2.2
Retail Trade	7,520	7,840	7,900	-4.1	-4.8
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,340	1,370	1,360	-2.2	-1.5
Services	8,300	8,510	7,740	-2.5	7.2
Government Administration	3,680	3,730	3,420	-1.3	7.6
Government Education	2,910	2,960	3,400	-1.7	-14.4

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

new technology that has reduced the need for manual processing of handwritten and poorly printed addresses. Under the terms of the Postal Service's labor contract, career employees will be offered employment in other postal facilities. The Twin Falls center opened in 1992, operated by a private contractor, and the Postal Service took over operations in 1996.

- Idaho Home Health and Hospice is building a new 13,000-square foot headquarters office at 826 Eastland Drive in Twin Falls. Upon completion of construction, it will vacate its lease spaces in downtown Twin Falls.
- Four more employers have adopted employee drug screening policies to join the growing number of local businesses in the Magic Valley Drug-Free Workplace Project. The newest members are McDonald InsurServ, Twin Falls School District 411, Lance Clow's American Express Financial Advisors, and Renaldi Construction, all from Twin Falls. They join a

growing list of businesses that have taken a stand against drugs in the workplace by signing onto the project, which is a valley-wide effort to publicly recognize companies that have a drug-free workplace meeting the criteria established by the U.S. Department of Labor.

- The Twin Falls Area Chamber of Commerce gave the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Curtis T. Eaton award for business excellence to the T.W. Stivers family and Todd Blass of TitleFact, Inc. The award commemorates the standard for business and community leadership set by the late Curtis T. Eaton of Twin Falls Bank & Trust. Criteria include business practices, support for unique community activities, encouragement of employees' community involvement, leadership on important issue, and at least 10 years in business. TitleFact is a family firm owned by the T.W. Stivers family. T.W. Stivers is a former Speaker of the House in the Idaho Legislature. The award commends 38 years of involvement by TitleFact in the local chamber, the local library foundation, Magic Valley Regional Medical Center, Twin Falls' planning and zoning, the College of Southern Idaho, and local and statewide politics.
- Qwest Communications International, Inc., the broadband Internet communications company that offers local telephone service in much of the Magic Valley, announced the launch of its all-digital wireless voice and data service in Twin Falls and Pocatello. Qwest will integrate wireless voice and data functionality with typical office or home telephone service, paging and Internet browsing, and e-mail and information streaming services previously accessible by office or home PC.

#### **Jerome, Lincoln, Gooding, Blaine, and Camas Counties**

- Lincoln County has organized a new Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce to help promote countywide issues. The new Chamber replaces the old Shoshone Chamber of Commerce. The name was changed so that people from Richfield and Dietrich would be included and could identify with chamber activities. Initial response has been excellent and nearly 30 persons attended the organizational meeting. Many ideas were presented for fostering county friendships, neighborhood gatherings, and both fun and informative programs.
- The Sun Valley Company has hired approximately 380 of its 1,500 workers from foreign countries this year. The workers come from over a dozen countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. The workers remain in Sun Valley for periods of anywhere from two to eighteen months. To hire internationals, the Sun Valley Company must go through

immigration procedures and job postings to give preference to U.S. citizens, and then foreign applicants are interviewed by telephone and approved for work in Sun Valley by their countries. Many of the international workers are college students, usually studying for careers in the hospitality industry. They must be able to speak English, however, they do wear a brass nameplate with their name and country of origin that provides guests with a flavor for the international atmosphere. Dozens of jobs are involved including ski lift operations, hotel housekeeping, dining room attendants, reservations and guest services, kitchens, executive offices, and maintenance shops.

#### **Cassia and Minidoka Counties**

- Mini-Cassia area farmers and businesses have been involved with others statewide in the giveaway of thousands of pounds of potatoes. It is an attempt to lower the surplus of potatoes, in hopes that it will eventually help stabilize and raise prices. Present prices of around \$1.00 per hundredweight are only about 20 percent of what farmers need to break even or make a profit, so instead of letting potatoes go to waste, the potatoes are being donated to charitable organizations or dumped onto fields as fertilizer. In December 2000, a company called the Potato Management Company (PMC) was formed to manage the massive surplus in Idaho this year. Growers commit to sell at least ten percent of their crop to PMC for a total of \$1, and they sign a one-year membership agreement with PMC paying \$500 for one share of voting stock. PMC takes control of the potatoes and they are marked, inspected, and the company or its agents will handle the disposal with the net cost, if any, charged to the grower. According to PMC, the surplus in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho is 30 million hundredweight more in storage than at this time last year. While this contribution will not make a large difference in the surplus, the Mini-Cassia area farmers are glad to be helping others and are working hard to ensure that the potatoes reach people in need.

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